Assessing for Safety and Risk

Illinois Department of DCFS
Children & Family Services

Core Competencies

- Discern the difference between safety and risk

- Approach the entire process through a culturally sensitive lens.

- Demonstrate the recognition of the impact of worker bias on assessment

A Reminder: Safety is Assessed….

throughout the life of the case

Statutory Definitions
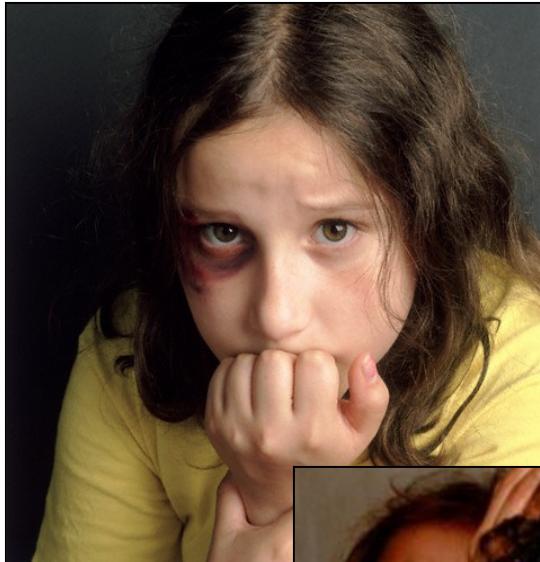
Abuse

Neglect

ependency

The Goal of Assessing Safety and Risk

Concepts of Safety vs. Risk

▶ Toyota Camry example – recall and ask for other examples – none that are child welfare (summarize the concerns of this situation)

Safety vs. Risk

	SAFETY	RISK
TIME	NOW OR VERY NEAR FUTURE	LONGER TERM
DEGREE OF HARM	MODERATE TO SEVERE	LOW TO SEVERE
PURPOSE OF INTERVENTION	CONTROL	RESOLVE OR REDUCE

Front Burner/Back Burner Exercise

Core Competencies Part 2

▸ Demonstrate an understanding of Safety and Risk as they relate to Assessment Tools

▸ Utilize 300 and Appendix G to guide practice

▸ Thoroughly examine each of 16 Safety Threats and understand the application of the CERAP as a tool in the investigation

Definition of Risk

Risk is the likelihood of any degree of longer-term future harm/maltreatment.

Note: It does not predict when the future harm might occur, but rather the **likelihood** of it happening at all.

Definition of Safety

"Safe" means that, after considering all reasonably available information/evidence concerning the presence of each of the 16 potential safety threats, and taking into account the vulnerability of the child, and considering the caregiver(s)'s displayed ability/action to mitigate any identified threats, it is determined that a child in a household or in custodial care is <u>not</u> likely to be moderately or severely harmed immediately or in the near future.

Definition of Safety

"**Unsafe**" means that, after considering all reasonably available information/evidence concerning the presence of each of the 16 potential safety threats, and taking into account the vulnerability of the child, and considering the caregiver(s)'s displayed ability/action to mitigate any identified threats, it is determined that a child in a household or in custodial care <u>is</u> likely to be moderately or severely harmed immediately or in the near future.

Similarities between Safety and Risk

▸ Both concerned with degree of harm.
▸ Both relate to conditions of:
  ◦ Home environment
  ◦ Caretaker, family member, or paramour behavior
  ◦ Child's vulnerabilities
▸ Both can change quickly.
▸ Both can be managed through intervention.

Mitigation Discussion Definition

▶ Appendix G reference (CERAP protocol)

Child Protection "Life of the Case" Model

Information Gathered from Required Contacts:

Mandates ➝ Accurate Final Finding – 60 Days

Initial Assessment

SAFETY

RISK?

- ❖ Victim
- ❖ Alleged Perpetrator
- ❖ Caregiver
- ❖ Law Enforcement
- ❖ Physician/Other Medical
- ❖ Teachers
- ❖ Reporters
- ❖ Others

Mental Health?

DV?

AODA?

INDICATE Or UNFOUND

WITHIN 24 HOURS

STRENGTHS

OPEN A CASE?

WHY?
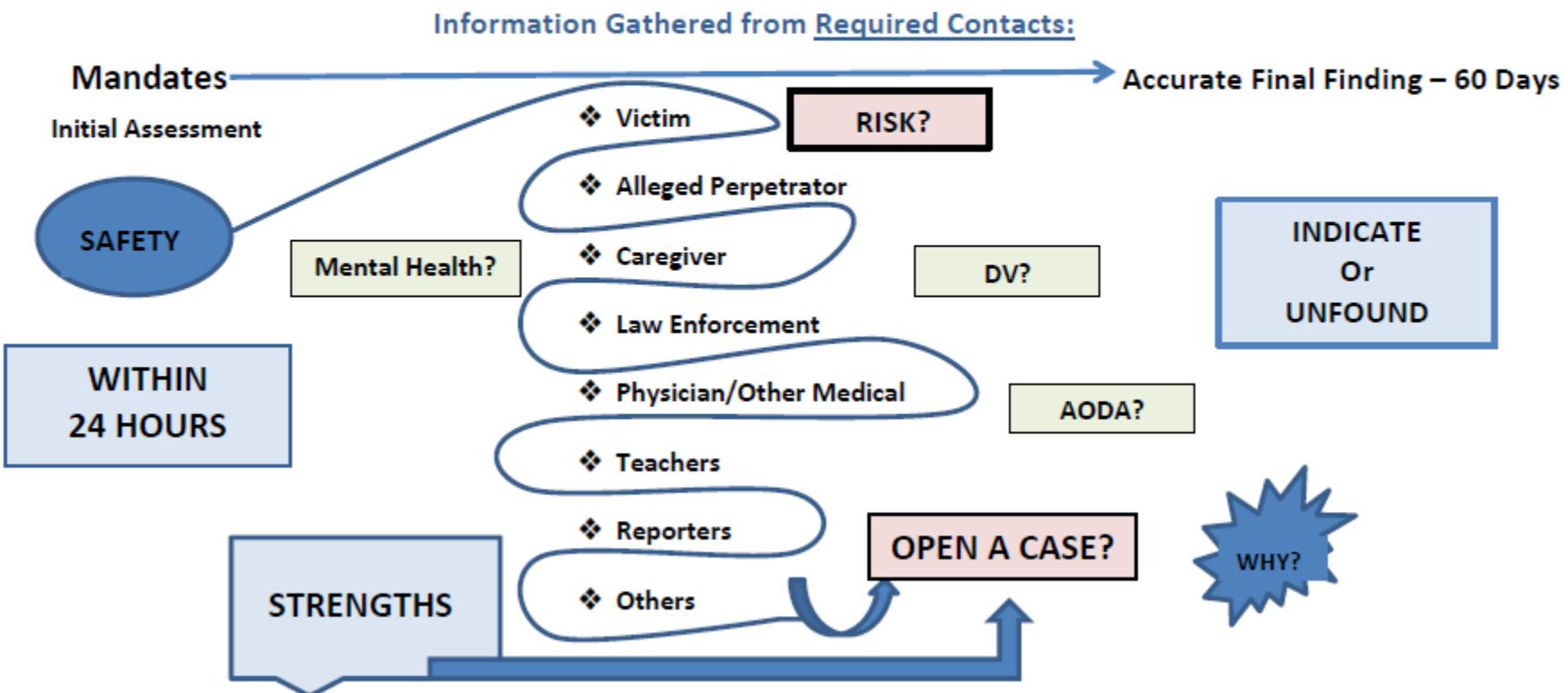
What does this mean for Assessment?

▸ Safety must be assessed continuously, throughout the life of the case

▸ Risk is assessed over a longer period of time, allowing time to gather, assess, and evaluate information.

Milestones - Investigations

1. Within 24 hours after the investigator first sees the child.
2. Whenever evidence or circumstance suggests that a child's safety may be in jeopardy.
3. Every 5 working days following the determination that a child is **unsafe** and a safety plan is implemented.
4. At the conclusion of the **formal** investigation, unless temporary custody is granted or there is an open intact case or assigned caseworker.

Definition of Caretaker

In relation to CERAP, "caretaker" refers to anyone who impacts the child's safety in the home.

Definition of Paramour

"…no legal or biological relationship to all the children."

Safety Assessment Goals (CERAP)

- **Determine if there is (or is not) a threat to the child's safety;**
- **Determine if the child is safe or unsafe; and**
- **Use our critical thinking skills to analyze and apply the information we collect from the safety assessment process.**
- **Accurately identify strengths and mitigating factors**

Safety Threats

"Safety threats" refer to a particular family condition that is present, uncontrolled and likely to result in severe consequences to the child.

Steps to Determining Safety

Step 1: Identify relevant safety threats.
Step 2: Describe the safety threat you
          checked.
Step 3: Record family strengths and
          mitigating circumstances.
Step 4: Make Safety Decision

Safety Threats

Safety Threats 1-16: Assessing immediate danger
of moderate to severe harm due to the identified
threat.

When assessing for Safety, consider Safety Threat Assessment:

○ **Child vulnerability**
○ **Severity of the Behavior/Condition**
○ **History**
○ **Safety Threat Identification**

Overview of CERAP

The **Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol (CERAP)** safety assessment is used in the larger protocols of CPI and CWS practice. It is a "life-of-the case" assessment protocol designed to provide workers with a mechanism for quickly assessing the potential for moderate to severe harm immediately or in the near future and for taking quick action to protect children.

The CERAP Protocol

- Safety Determination Form – CFS 1441
- Safety Plan – CFS 1441-A
- Practice Guidelines
- An instrument to document findings, decision-making, and actions.
- Set of threats that focus assessment and analysis on child safety, and circumstances or family strengths that might impact these threats.

What does this mean for you?

▶ Safety must be assessed quickly, often with limited information, at the initial visit and throughout the life of the case

▶ Risk is assessed over a longer period of time, allowing time to gather, assess, and evaluate information.

Family Strengths

Sometimes the best way to identify strengths is to directly ask the family.

Making the Safety Decision

If no Safety threats are marked or Safety threats that are marked can be mitigated, it is SAFE.

If Safety threats marked cannot be addressed by family strengths or mitigated, it is UNSAFE.

Critical Decision

CERAP/Safety Decisions - Identify the safety decision as safe or unsafe based upon the assessment of all safety threats and any pertinent mitigating family strengths and/or actions. **This decision requires supervisory consultation via phone at the time of assessment.**
1) If **no** safety threats are identified, all involved children **must** be assessed as safe.

Critical Decision

2) If one or more safety threats have been identified and **all** identified safety threats are adequately controlled by family strengths or actions, all involved children must be assessed as safe. **The fact that a child might be safe is independent from the decision regarding whether the allegation is indicated or not. A child may be safe from further abuse at the hands of a removed perpetrator, but that does not negate the fact that they were abused.**

3) If one or more safety threats have been identified and all identified safety threats are **not** controlled (mitigated) by family strengths or actions, all children affected by the unmitigated safety threat **must** be assessed as unsafe.

Critical Decision

When a decision is made that a child is unsafe, a safety plan must be developed and implemented or protective custody must be taken to avoid immediate danger to a child.

Safety Planning

If home is found to be UNSAFE:

Develop/implement Safety Plan.
- **Time frame for implementation.**

- **Plan for continued monitoring.**

- **A contingency plan if the primary safety plan is no longer effective.**

- **Requirements for terminating plan.**

Obtain required signatures and distribute plan.

"Least Intrusive"

Placement is not always needed to
control for harm.

What would be less intrusive options?

Safety Planning

- Minimally disruptive to child and family
- Families can request modification and/or termination of a safety plan at any time.
- Consideration should be given to a non-custodial parent when developing the safety plan.
- A safety plan cannot override any custody or visitation arrangements approved by court or by court order.
- A safety plan cannot be implemented after PC has lapsed and the State's Attorney has decided not to file a petition in juvenile court.

Safety Planning

- In-home Safety Plans
- In-home Safety Plan: Protective Caregivers
- In-home Safety Plan: Removal of Alleged Perpetrators

How is risk defined in the Child Endangerment Risk Assessment Protocol?

How does a risk threat compare to a safety threat?

6 Steps of Critical Thinking (Risk)

1. What information is available?
2. What am I being asked to believe or accept, what is (are) the hypothesis(s)?
3. What evidence is available to support these assertions, is it reliable and valid?
4. Are there alternative ways of interpreting the evidence?
5. What additional evidence would help to evaluate the alternatives?
6. What conclusions are most reasonable based on the evidence and the number of alternative explanations?

Home Safety Checklist

Home Safety Checklist

▶ **See the "Home Safety Checklist For CPSW (CFS 2027)"**

What are the leading causes of unintentional deaths of children under the age of five in Illinois?
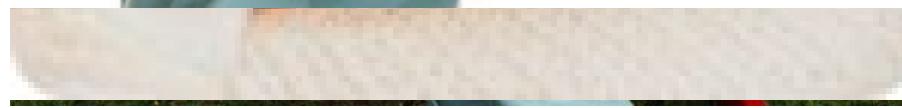
How is the Home Safety Checklist linked to the CERAP?
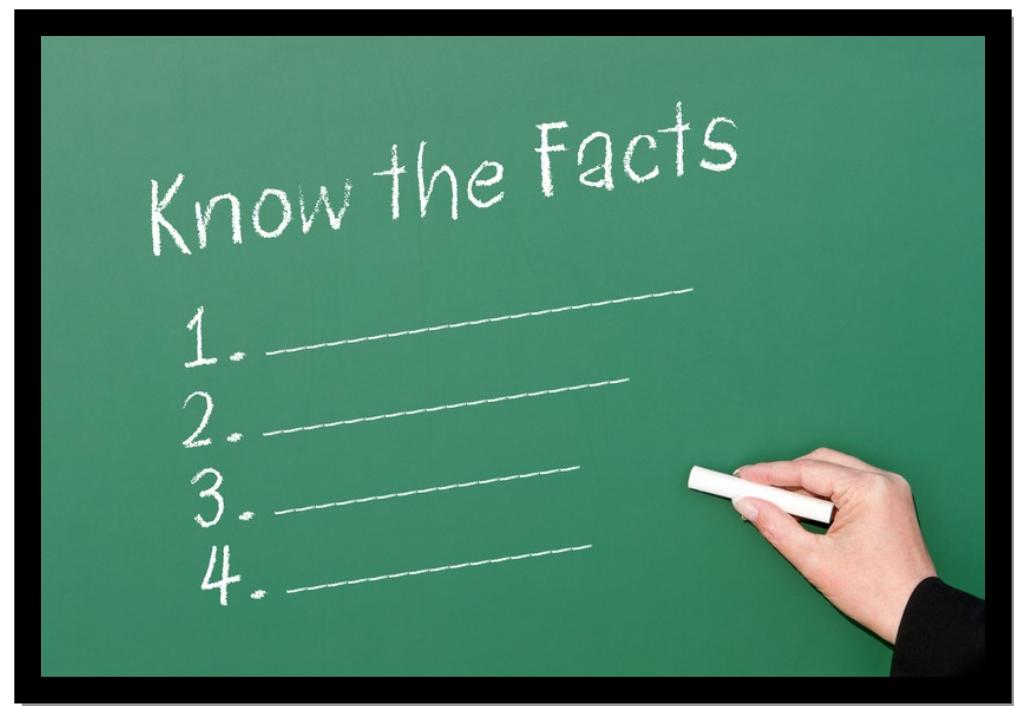
What are the milestones for when the Home Safety Checklist should be completed?
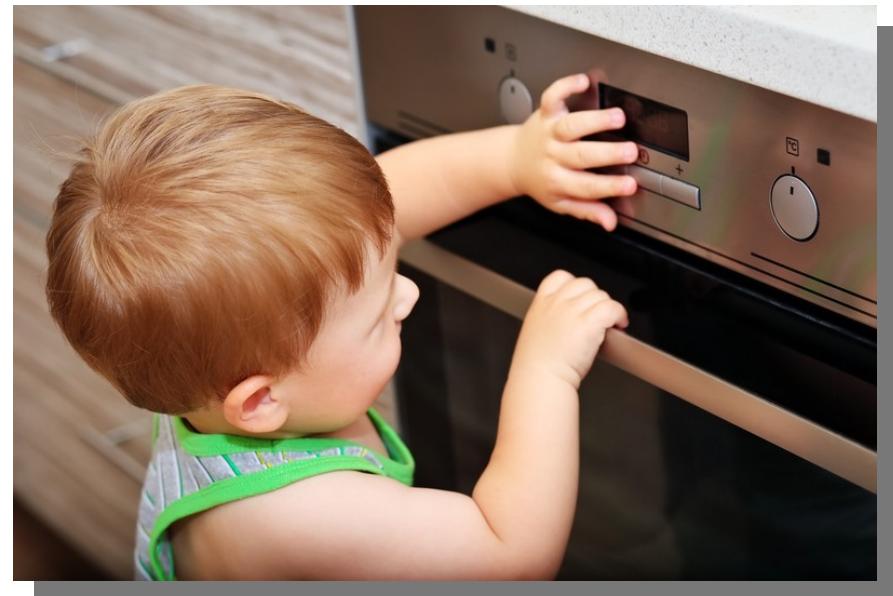
How to Complete the Checklist

- **Responsibility is <u>shared</u> by the parent**
  - Provide a copy of the Home Safety Checklist for Parents and Caregivers

- **Parent can decline**
  - Document the refusal

In this situation, what are you required to do?

…what shouldn't you do?

The following six pieces of literature that must be provided :

1. **Parent's Guide to Fire Safety for Babies and Toddlers"**
2. **Back to Sleep**
3. **Get Water Wise – Supervise**
4. **Never Shake A Baby!**
5. **Violence Prevention**
6. **A Helpful Guide for Parents and Caregivers**

PREPARE.
PRACTICE.
PREVENT THE UNTHINKABLE.

USFAParents.gov
A Parents Guide to Fire Safety for Babies and Toddlers

The following six pieces of literature that must be provided :

1. **Parent's Guide to Fire Safety for Babies and Toddlers"**
2. **Back to Sleep**
3. **Get Water Wise – Supervise**
4. **Never Shake A Baby!**
5. **Violence Prevention**
6. **A Helpful Guide for Parents and Caregivers**

PREPARE.
PRACTICE.
PREVENT THE UNTHINKABLE.

USFAParents.gov
A Parents Guide to Fire Safety for Babies and Toddlers

Summary –
Home Safety Checklist
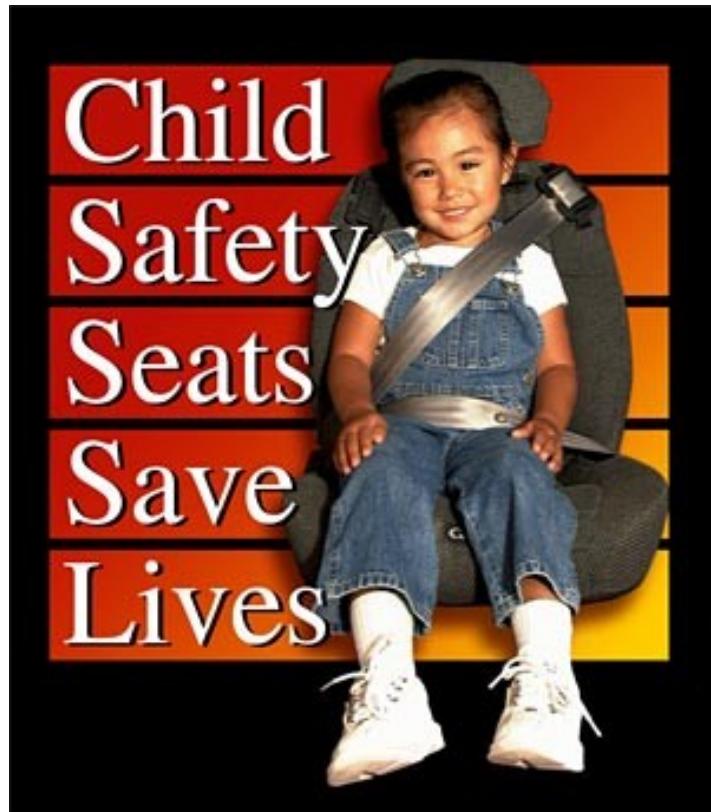
- **Opportunity for collaboration with the family**
- **Links to …**
  ◦ **CERAP**
  ◦ **Allegations**
- *Questions*
- *Concerns*